AN INVESTIGATION OF K-5/6 PRESERVICE TEACHERS' KNOWLEDGE AND BELIEFS ABOUT THE UTAH CORE STATE STANDARDS AND ENGLISH LEARNERS

by

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ABSTRACT

The State of Utah adopted the Utah Core State Standards (UCSS) in 2010, and realized full implementation at Local Education Agencies (LEAs) during the 2013-2014 school year. During this same period of time, minority enrollment statewide increased by nearly 60,000 students (USOE 2015). Many of these students, situated in minority-majority school districts throughout Utah, are also English Language Learners (ELLs). This study investigates K-5/6 preservice teachers with regard to their beliefs and knowledge of the Utah Core State Standards and English Language Learners.

There is a significant amount of prior research on the subjects of what teachers need to know and the concept of TLA (TLA) (Andrews, 2003; Christison & Murray, 2014; Fillmore & Snow, 2000). This study examines teacher beliefs related to their current and prior coursework on the UCSS, preparedness to teach and implement the UCSS, confidence in their knowledge of teaching English and grammatical structures, and whether or not K-5/6 preservice teachers require more explicit instruction on the UCSS.

Findings suggest that while K-5/6 preservice teachers have some knowledge of the UCSS, many feel that they need more explicit instruction of the contents, specifically with regard to ELLs and their linguistic needs. In addition, although most respondents feel their education related to teaching to the UCSS has been of high quality, far too many respondents felt that the UCSS would "provide the full range of support for

teaching English Language Learners". Results also suggest that instructors at the university level may need to adopt clear teaching strategies to explain the role of the UCSS and Utah's membership in the World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) consortium.

To my beloved husband Jeffrey and our children Caroline and Claire,
who sustain me with their love, affection, and steadfastness.

“Every teacher is a language teacher.”
Jeff Zwiers, 2008, *Building Academic Language*

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journey. You have cheered me on and been my foundation all throughout this process. My tenacity, dedication and sheer will and determination come from your strength.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In 1974, the United States Supreme Court ruled in Lau v. Nichols that the lack of linguistically appropriate accommodations for students with Limited English Proficiency (LEP) was discriminatory and unconstitutional. In effect, this ruling instituted entitlements for English Language Learners (ELLs) and LEPs nationwide based on the affordances of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. No student, regardless of race, color, national origin, religion, or linguistic background would be denied a quality public education under the fourteenth amendment.

According to the Utah State Office of Education (USOE) and the most recent Utah Academic Language Proficiency Assessment (UALPA) data, nearly 13.5% of all statewide students identified as LEP or ELL in Utah are considered pre-emergent or emergent English language learners (USOE, 2007). The overwhelming majority of these students are language minority students. The English Language Acquisition, Language Enhancement, and Academic Achievement Act, also known as Title III (U.S. Department of Education, 2014) outlines the guidelines for LEP and ELL students that state that schools must provide language instruction for LEPs and immigrant students. As recently as January 2015, the U.S. Department of Education (DOE) Office for Civil Rights and the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) Civil Rights Division released a guidance paper

(referred to hereafter as "The Guidance") ensuring that ELL students must be able to participate "meaningfully and equally in education programs" (USDOE & USDOJ, 2015). The aim of The Guidance is to assist State Education Agencies (SEAs) with the task of identifying, assessing, evaluating, and monitoring ELL and LEP students' progress. While not comprehensive in scope, it does nonetheless remind SEAs that under the Civil Rights Act, all students have the right to participate meaningfully and equally in their education. The Guidance points out that nine percent of all students in US public schools are ELLs or LEPs and that "nearly three out of every four public schools" have students receiving services related to language equity (p.1).

In Utah, more than 23% of the public school enrollment consists of self-reported minority students, and more than two-thirds of all minorities are of Hispanic or Latino origin (USOE, 2014). In Salt Lake County, the most populous metro-county in Utah, the data for minority status are even more pronounced. There are five school districts in Salt Lake County, listed here from largest to smallest: Granite School District, Jordan School District, Canyons School District, Salt Lake City School District, and Murray School District. According to Salt Lake City Public Schools, a staggering 58% of respondents were identified as minority students, and of those, nearly 71% were Hispanic or Latino (2013). This demographic makes the Salt Lake City School District a minority-majority district. This trend towards minority-majority school districts in metropolitan areas is a rapidly growing trend in the United States. For example, according to US Census data, the three states with the highest Hispanic or Latino populations (i.e., California, Texas, and Illinois), all report metropolitan school districts with minority-majority status (2010).

The largest school district in Salt Lake County fares no differently: Granite

School District reports that 44% of their students are of a minority status, with almost 62% of those students self-reporting as Hispanic or Latino in origin. It should be noted that from respondents' self-reports of minority status one should not automatically conclude that they speak a language other than English. Granite and Salt Lake districts gather data on self-reported ethnic status and on "other" languages spoken most often in the home. Table 1.1 shows data for other languages spoken in Salt Lake City and Granite School Districts. These data were procured during personal communication from Garret Flores and Edie Park in the research departments at both school districts (January 7, 2015 and January 8, 2015, respectively).

Aside from the fact that the demographics of Utah are changing at a precipitous pace and that this fact alone creates numerous challenges, the State of Utah is concerned about maintaining quality in public schools. To this end the Utah State Office of Education (USOE) has recently instituted and formally adopted the Utah Core State Standards (UCSS). The UCSS became effective in the 2013-2014 school year and have been implemented at the State level and within Local Education Agencies (LEAs). In addition to the UCSS, the State also adopted and implemented the Student Assessment of Growth and Excellence (SAGE) test, which is a summative assessment evaluating students' grade-level knowledge. The SAGE test is aligned with the objectives of the UCSS.

There have been many different names by which the Utah Core State Standards are referred to. According to Sarah Wald and Christine Thorne at the USOE, they are internally referred to as "the standards", "the core" and "the Utah Standards" (personal communication October 7, 2015). Additionally, the Salt Lake Tribune refers to this set of

documents as the “Utah Common Core State Standards” (2011), the “UCCSS” (2011), and the “Utah Core Standards” (2012). The Attorney General for the State of Utah, Sean Reyes, has referred to these documents as the “Utah Core Standards” (2014). The USOE, on their website, has a document entitled “Core Standards for Academic Curriculum” (CSAC) (2013). This massive document, at more than 2500 pages in length, represents an amalgam of many different documents across a broad spectrum of grades, ages, and topics. According to Mark Peterson at the USOE, the Utah Core State Standards (UCSS) are just one document within the CSAC (October 20, 2015). For purposes of clarity and succinctness, this research study refers to the common core standards for Utah as either the UCSS, which is the title of the document found in the CSAC, or, simply, the common core. Additionally, references to the nationwide standards movement in public schools are referred to as the Common Core or the Common Core State Standards.

In sum, the pressure on public school educators to “drive high quality instruction”, while simultaneously adapting to our diverse and ever-changing demographics, is intense. The State of Utah needs a cadre of teachers who are well versed in teaching to the UCSS and familiar with SAGE in order to provide meaningful and equitable educational opportunities for all students. Current teachers are involved in a number of in-service initiatives directed at helping them develop their expertise. In addition to their current and practicing teachers, school districts also need to think about the teachers they will hire in the future. Districts need to hire new teachers who already have demonstrated skills related to UCSS. To this end, universities with preservice teacher education programs must be concerned with what their graduates know about the UCSS and how well they are able to incorporate ideas from the UCSS onto their planning

and preparation.

Research Questions

The current study is aimed at preservice teachers' beliefs about and knowledge of the UCSS as it relates to the education of ELLs. The research questions that motivated this study are the following:

1) Do K-5/6 preservice teachers believe that their coursework at the University of Utah, which is part of the ESL endorsement, prepares them for teaching to the Utah Core State Standards (UCSS)?
2) Do K-5/6 preservice teachers in Utah have confidence in their knowledge of teaching the English language and its grammatical structures?
3) What are K-5/6 preservice teachers' beliefs about whether the courses they take are preparing them to teach and implement the UCSS?
4) Do K-5/6 preservice teachers want explicit instruction for implementing and/or teaching to the UCSS?
5) Do Utah K-5/6 preservice teachers believe they are prepared to teach ELLs by teaching to the Utah Core State Standards?

Table 1.1

Students Speaking "Other" Languages in the Home

Student Data	**Salt Lake City School District**	**Granite School District**
Total number of students	23,615	67,602
Number of "other" languages	9,361	22,078
Number for Spanish language	7069	16,666
Percent of "other" languages	40%	33%
Percent for Spanish language	30%	25%

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Teacher Language Awareness

There is a considerable body of work in applied linguistics on the development of teacher language awareness (TLA). TLA encompasses both *knowledge of* language and *knowledge about* language. According to Andrews (2003), concerns about TLA in English language teaching have tended to focus on the language proficiency of teachers (i.e., their knowledge *of* language) rather than on their knowledge *about* language, which for English language teachers can also be considered subject-matter knowledge. There is also another type of language awareness. For content-area teachers (e.g., math, science, history teachers) of English language learners (ELLs) there is pedagogical content knowledge—knowledge of the language of one's content area and how to teach it to language learners. Therefore, the dual process of an educator's knowledge about language and content is central for L1 and L2 students entering the educational system in the United States specifically, the state of Utah.

Andrews (2003) informs us that TLA is "metacognitive in nature" (p. 86). This "extra awareness" of language adds a dimension to teacher knowledge that aids in both lesson planning and instruction. Additionally, TLA often means that teachers can look at language from a language learner's perspective. An educator should be keenly aware of

their students' developing interlanguage, as well as the potential for difficulties with the content of a lesson. We learn from Wright that "a linguistically aware teacher not only understands how language works, but understands the student's struggle with language and is sensitive to errors" and other interlanguage features (1993, p. 302).

TLA assumes a three-pronged approach with regard to an educator's pedagogical practices. According to Wright and Bolitho (1997), there is a crucial interconnection between the teacher as (1) a language user, (2) a language analyst, and (3) a language teacher. These three areas are referred to as the domains of TLA. The first domain is the teacher as a language user. To be competent in this domain a teacher must have a certain level of language proficiency or knowledge of the language. The second domain, the language analyst, demands that teachers have a "sound knowledge of the language systems" (Andrews, 2003), whereas the third domain, the language teacher, includes pedagogical content knowledge (PCK), which is knowledge of the language specific to a content area and knowledge of how to teach it (2003, p. 84). Mastery of these three domains of TLA is critical for a teacher and necessary in creating effective learning experiences in a classroom and executing successful pedagogical practices for ELLs.

Standards-Based Movement and Curriculum

The standards-based movement was primarily borne out of the publication *A Nation at Risk* by the National Commission on Excellence in Education, published in 1983. Many different organizations and groups such as the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, the National Governor's Association, and Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) began to examine varying types of reform in education

due, in no small part, to the bleak educational outlook discussed in *A Nation at Risk.* Within two decades, federal funding was granted to the National Governor's Association to study standards in "mathematics and other subject areas" (Christison & Murray, 2014). The resulting document, the Common Core State Standards, covers the broad expanse of English Language Arts, History, Social Studies, Science and Technical Subjects, and Mathematics (Common Core State Standards 2010).

In contrast to other types of curriculum design, like Outcome-based Education (OBE) and Competency-based Language Teaching (CBLT), which has strong roots in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction, the Standards-based Curriculum is a relatively new approach to language teaching and learning. According to Christison and Murray (2014), the conceptual framework for standards-based education is "focused on what learners *know* and are *able to do*" (p. 236). Fueled in part by both governmental and nongovernmental interests, the standards-based curriculum employs a framework whereby certain criteria and benchmarks are met with regard to language learning and core curriculum content areas. According to Christison and Murray, the Common European Framework of Reference for Language (CEFR) provides guidelines for both "general competencies and communicative language competencies" (p. 238). Because it is used for more than three-dozen languages in Europe, the CEFR is a widely accepted and a well-defined curricular process. The authors also report that while the CEFR does not in and of itself hew to the standards movement per se, it does, nonetheless, "parallel those of others standards documents" (p. 238).

Utah Core State Standards

The nationwide movement of the Common Core State Standards Initiative (CCSS), which 46 states have adopted, and the Utah Core State Standards (UCSS), which were approved by the Utah State Board of Education in 2010, are meant to provide guidelines for teachers in working with all students. Nevertheless, the CCSS and the UCSS provide a very clear statement about the document with regard to students who are considered to be English Language Learners (ELLs). Both core documents claim that it is "beyond the scope…to define the full range of supports appropriate for English language learners" (CCSS p. 6, UCSS p. 5). The only other reference that the Standards make to ELLs is that "[e]ach grade will include students who are still acquiring English. For those students, it is possible to meet the standards in reading, writing, speaking, and listening without displaying native-like control of conventions and vocabulary" (UCSS, p. 6). This statement by the UCSS puts Utah educators in a very difficult position. On the one hand, for example, Granite School District and Salt Lake City School District teachers are expected to teach to the World-class Instructional Design and Assessment standards, yet the UCSS documents do not provide any pedagogical tools to aid L2 learners. In this regard, the UCSS distances itself from ELLs.

In nearly every community across the United States, public school districts are experiencing "expanding enrollments of students whose primary language is not English" (Short and Fitzsimmons, 2007). As a result of the changing demographics of local classrooms, it seems safe to say that the scope of the UCSS is not sufficient if it does not include standards for English language development. There seems to be a clear and evident discrepancy between the policy and the people it is meant to serve.

There is a discord between the CCSS and how the standards represent the needs of ELLs. Short and Fitzsimmons (2007) describe the challenge that ELLs face in US public schools as double the work. ELLs entering Utah public schools not only have to learn the mainstream content and satisfy curricular objectives as set forth in the standards, but simultaneously they must also learn English as well. In Utah, in grades Kindergarten (K) through 5, this means that the responsibility for teaching the four skills—reading, writing, speaking, and listening—rests with just one educator. This places an enormous amount of pressure on K-5 teachers.

English Language Learners

Short and Fitzsimmons (2007) state that Utah's growth in what they term as Limited English Proficient students (LEPs) has expanded at a rate of +100%-+199% from 1993-2003 (p. 22). To its credit, Utah is working to identify LEPs and ELLs and improve educational outcomes. Utah is a member of WIDA (the World-class Instructional Design and Assessment standards) and administers ACCESS (Accessing Comprehension and Communication in English State to State) for ELLs. Founded in 2002 after the No Child Left Behind Act, WIDA's mission is to "advance academic language development and academic achievement for linguistically diverse students" (2015). WIDA has published numerous assessments and guidance documents that aid educators with regard to teaching ELLs. Their core values include a "Can Do" philosophy, with the goal of being the "most trusted resource in the education…of language learners" (2015).

Previous to its membership in WIDA, the USOE tried to develop and maintain its

own assessment standards for ELLs. This assessment was called the Utah Academic Language Proficiency Assessment (UALPA) and was administered in the State public schools until the 2012-2013 school year. However, new federal guidelines mandated a screener entrance assessment and ongoing summative assessments. According to personal communication with Daron Kennett at the USOE, the UALPA assessment was not designed for these two tasks (October 21, 2015). Administering and updating of the UALPA proved cumbersome and expensive for the USOE to manage, and by not providing a screener entrance assessment like WIDA's WIDA Access Placement Test (WAPT), the USOE was not compliant with federal guidelines. By adopting the WIDA standards for the 2014-2015 school year, Utah is now part of a consortium that employs professional consultants with expertise in assessment and teaching the English language.

According to Short and Fitzsimmons (2007), when English learners are assessed via the WIDA standards, or formerly the UALPA, they are being assessed on standards that require they do "double the work." They are not only learning English but are simultaneously learning the content as well. There is no easy solution. To date, the outlook has not met public expectations for English learners' achievement, and the availability of special services is severely limited by budget constraints. For these reasons, educators and policy makers must find a way to integrate both language and content learning into mainstream courses and incorporate ELL practices in the UCSS.

Coupled with the fact that ELL students are doing twice as much work, Short and Fitzsimmons (2007) also decry that there is a "lack of professional development opportunities for teaching literacy" to ELLs and that of teachers in general, "fewer still have had training to teach second language literacy" (p. 22), both of which are necessary

to help ELLs meet the language and content demands outlined in the UCSS. Providing opportunities for preservice teacher education is crucial to the success of ELLs in content classrooms. Additionally, one could argue that opportunities for in-service teacher professional development are just as important. Short and Fitzsimmons describe in Table 2.1 how experience with specific areas of study like first language (L1) and second language (L2) acquisition, subject-area content, English as a second language (ESL) teaching methods, L2 literacy development, assessment practices for ELLs, and curriculum design that includes content and language integration should be important components of all teacher development programs.

According to Wong and Fillmore (2000), an important educational component with which both preservice and in-service teachers need to have experience to be effective with ELLs includes basic language development with a specific focus on academic language for school-aged children and L2 learning and teaching. Wong and Fillmore's hypothetical class on L2 acquisition and development focuses on "theoretical and practical knowledge about how L2 acquisition proceeds and the factors that affect it" (p. 32). Background knowledge in L2 acquisition and language development would bridge the gap between what is required of our educators in the common core and the thousands of students who enter Utah schools each year with pre-emergent (i.e., limited or no understanding of oral or written English) or emergent (i.e., basic social conventions, simple directions or commands) English language proficiency.

In addition to coursework dedicated to language development and L2 acquisition, Wong and Fillmore (2000) report that there are two other important aspects of language with which teachers need direct experience: oral language and written language. To

effectively teach language and/or content, teachers need to know the elemental units of English—the study of its phonemic inventory, morphemes, words, phrases, sentences, and discourse. These are the building blocks of English and all languages (p. 14). The authors rightfully claim that, "oral language functions as the foundation for literacy and as the means for learning in school and out" (p.14). With direct and explicit instruction to aid learning with regard to oral language skills, teachers can better help their students by understanding these essential foundations of English.

As two of the four skills of communication, speaking and listening are no doubt critical skills. But the very foundation of literacy means the ability to write and read as well. As Wong and Fillmore explain, "written language is not just oral language transcribed to the page" (p. 25). The eclectic nature of English orthography takes dedication and skill both to teach and to learn. The authors take considerable time discussing phonemic differences in words that all start with the same orthographic convention, for example, the initial sound in the words *sugar* and *salt*. Such phonemic differences present significant difficulties to L2 learners learning to write. Experience with the phonemic inventory of another language is helpful for teachers. It can help teachers understand why English spelling is so difficult to learn and "why students make certain types of errors" (p. 27). Multiple exposures to the language in written form help with both reading fluency and written literacy.

Although the TESOL Pre-K-12 standards preceded the Common Core State Standards movement, they have been revised and updated to be "aligned with the Common Core State Standards and its assessment procedures" (Christison & Murray, p. 242). The TESOL standards are consistent in their vision with the core standards

movement. In addition, the TESOL standards "are specific" (p. 242) to contextual learning guidelines in the United States and employ a "bottom-up process" (p. 243). This means that for EFL learners, the guidelines emanating from both TESOL and the CCSS provide students with congruent goals.

However, there are many critics of the CCSS movement. As mentioned earlier, the TESOL standards are considered to be a bottom-up process (i.e., beginning with words and piecing together morphemes to make new words: add, add+ing, add+ed), but the Common Core State Standards are often viewed as a top-down process (i.e. reverse engineering a process into its parts: students will know what morphemes create nouns, verbs, adjectives). Because individual states in the United States have jurisdiction over education and educational policy, the federal Common Core Standards are often viewed as "federal government overreach" (p. 243). Additionally, even though the Common Core State Standards focus on what has been learned along with how students are able to validate their learning, critics often point to the fact that a standards-based curriculum is "reductionist and product-driven" (p. 243). A common oft-repeated phrase is "teaching to the test". Christison and Murray (2014) tell us that synergizing both a bottom-up and top-down approach in the curricular process, as well as leaving room and flexibility for local decision-making, the Common Core State Standards can be interpreted as a very reasonable set of guidelines.

The Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL) published a practitioner brief entitled *Implementing the Common Core for English Learners* (Duguay, Massoud, Tabaku, Himmel, & Sugarman, 2013). The document, which is an amalgam of in-service teacher questions that have arisen from CAL professional development sessions, attempts to

describe the “key challenges” faced by ELLs and acts as a resource for teachers trying to support their students in their quest to learn (p. 1). Duguay and coauthors remind us that ELLs are not a “homogeneous group of students” and that all learners are unique and bring differing cultural and linguistic backgrounds to the classroom (p. 1). With these factors in mind, the authors attempt to synthesize parts of the CCSS with specific focus in three discrete language areas: (1) focus on language and literacy, (2) shift in text type, and (3) focus on argumentation (p. 4). Each section concludes with practical ideas and activities for the classroom to assist in implementing the practitioner brief. In the latter half of the document in-service teachers posit direct questions with regard to the CCSS. The authors address these questions with sections called “Ideas for the Classroom”. One can conclude that while this document was written for current practicing teachers, it would also be helpful to preservice teachers so that they can see the challenges that lie ahead with regard to educating ELLs.

With a focus on language and literacy in the CCSS and the UCSS, teachers are tasked with the dual demands of developing these skills regardless of L1 across all content areas. Duguay and colleagues (2013) tell us that teachers must “purposefully integrate speaking and listening skills into content instruction”, thereby, making the classroom more learner-centric (p. 2). To enable successful learning, teachers must be able to identify learning strategies for teaching language and literacy while simultaneously embedding the information in their content instruction and choosing the most appropriate language elements. This is a difficult task to require of content teachers; Duguay and colleagues (2013) remind us that when students add to the classroom conversation, teachers should “focus on meaning” while still directing attention to form,

so as not to dissuade learners from producing "authentic speech" (p. 3).

The CCSS recommends that the distribution of text type follow those outlined in the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) document of 2009. In this publication, the suggestion is to provide a wide array of text types to learners, increasing percentages of informational text as the grades progress. This affords students the opportunity to experience learning through a variety of text types and gives students exposure to "language structures that differ from those found in fiction" (p. 3) (a common text type found in lower grades). Texts, including biographies, descriptive text, expository text, and narrative text give affordances to varying forms of information while embedding language skills and developing content knowledge (p. 3).

The final focus that Duguay and colleagues (2013) target is writing skills, on which the CCSS puts a heavy emphasis. The UCSS and the CCSS make ready mention of "college and career readiness", and a major component of this readiness is skill with writing, but neither document addresses how to help L2 learners achieve this skill (UCSS ELA p. 1, CCSS p. 8). The practitioner brief focuses on argumentation because this skill is critical in all types of writing "across content areas and grade levels" (p. 4). Defining an argument, making a hypothesis, formulating an opinion, and defending a thesis are all types of written arguments that are considered an "authentic process of literate adults" (p. 4). Teachers are tasked with not only teaching writing skills, but also the evidentiary process necessary in the discipline needed to help students formulate a substantial argument.

The three areas targeted in the CAL document are language and literacy, focus on text type, and formulating an argument, use the four language skills—speaking, listening,

reading, and writing. The practitioner brief goes on to describe activities and tasks that educators can employ in the classroom to aid and assist ELLs in successful learning.

Conclusion

On August 8, 2010, the Utah State Office of Education (USOE) and the State of Utah adopted the Common Core State Standards initiative (CCSS) and established the Utah Core State Standards (UCSS). The first draft of UCSS was released in 2009 and modeled after the CCSS. As mentioned earlier from Christison and Murray (2014), the CCSS affords states the flexibility for local programmatic differences—differences that may or may not necessarily align with the CCSS (p. 243). By the 2013-2014 school year, school districts in Utah were expected to have achieved full implementation of the UCSS.

According to the USOE "Promises to Keep" statement, the State of Utah makes the affirmation that "Utah's public education system keeps its constitutional promise by ensuring literacy and numeracy for all Utah children" (2015). At odds with this statement are a number of examples that are insistent with this promise, for example, the UCSS does not specify standards for ELLs, yet the USOE promises literacy for all Utah children. A first step toward keeping this State's promise as it relates to ELLs would be to integrate the WIDA standards into the UCSS. Because the WIDA standards link language and content, provide for a variation in language background, and allow for assessment and evaluation, the USOE could fulfill its promise to Utah children by ensuring standards in literacy for all students with this integration.

Table 2.1
Recommended Preservice Teacher Development Coursework

Teacher Development Coursework	
Area of study	Purpose
First and second language acquisition	Knowledge of L1 and L2 theory
Subject-area content	Deep understanding of content
ESL and sheltered instruction	Knowledge of integrating language activities
Content pedagogy	Specific methods for different content needs
Linguistic and cross-cultural contexts	Understanding language policies, cultural differences in English and native language
Curriculum development	Ability to design content-based ESL curricula
Assessment	Minimize demands of ELLs while simultaneously provide opportunities to demonstrate mastery of content

Adapted from Short, D. J., & Fitzsimmons, S. (2007, p. 23).

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this chapter is to present the research design and methodology employed in this study. In addition, I will also offer my own orientation to research—in other words, my epistemological (i.e., my ideas about what can be known and the relationship of the knower to the known) and ontological (i.e., my ideas about the nature of reality) views about research because these views inform the choices that I made about the research methodology.

Research Design

This study used an online survey to collect quantitative data. According to Aliaga and Gunderson, one of the goals of quantitative research studies is to explain "phenomena by collecting numerical data that are analyzed using mathematically based methods" (2000). The survey in this study focused on K-5/6 preservice teachers' beliefs and knowledge of the Utah Core State Standards (UCSS) and English language learners (ELLs) and sought to answer the research questions posited in Chapter 1. The questions in the survey focused on K-5/6 preservice teachers' experiences with the UCSS, the preparation they received in their preservice teacher education program for working with UCSS, and their confidence levels related to their knowledge and their skills for

implementing the UCSS. Furthermore, the study aims to address how teachers' beliefs about the UCSS intersect with the beliefs about the instruction they had received about the UCSS during their teacher education program.

Research Paradigms

With regard to my orientation as a researcher, I see that I support both a positivist and constructionist research paradigm (Hatch, 2002) in answering my research questions. In educational research, the term paradigm must generate answers to certain questions: What is the nature of reality? What can be known about the relationship of the knower and what is known? What questions can legitimately be asked and what techniques can be employed? According to Hatch, "answers to these questions reveal sets of assumptions that distinguish fundamentally different belief systems concerning how the world is ordered, what we may know about it, and how we may know it" (p. 11). Obviously, these assumptions influence what can be researched and the outcomes of the research. Subsequent to these questions and assumptions, it is Hatch's (2002) definition of paradigm that is employed here.

In terms of my own choice of research methodology (i.e., my use of surveys), I can see that I have some positivist leanings. In other words, there is a part of me that believes there is a definite reality out there to be studied and captured by looking at numerical data. According to Hatch (2002), "positivists are realists who believe in an objective universe that has order independent of human perceptions" (p. 12). In terms of my epistemological views, I also believe that the researcher and the respondents to the survey are co-constructors of what can be known. Again, according to Hatch (2001),

constructivists view "knowledge as a human construction" (p. 13). Consequently, I have focused portions of the survey on K-5/6 preservice teachers' beliefs about the UCSS and see their beliefs as important in constructing my own understandings of the UCSS in the teacher education program.

In terms of my ontological views (i.e., the nature of reality), I believe that there are multiple realities that are constructed in the process of doing survey research. As a researcher I hold to a positivist view that on some level, "reality is able to be understood" (p. 13). In terms of "forms of knowledge produced" or "products" that culminate from this type of quantitative research, I believe that it is reasonable to conclude that surveys produce factual data, which is certainly typical of a positivist viewpoint. However, I can also see that factual data may only give us part of the picture. Because this survey I constructed asked respondents to provide belief statements, I also argue that from a constructivist paradigm, an "interpretation" or "narrative" of the data is part of the "forms of knowledge produced" (p. 13) that can be produced.

Respondents

Respondents in this study were preservice teachers enrolled in EDU 5200/6200, TLA; and LING 5811, Educating Language Learners during the Spring Semester 2015 at the University of Utah. Both of the aforementioned classes are required for K-12 licensure and for the Utah State Office of Education (USOE) ESL (English as a Second Language) endorsement requirement. Eight respondents were male, 45 were female, and one respondent replied "other". There were 54 respondents who completed the survey.

Most of the respondents answered that they planned to teach elementary

education (*n*=37). However, there were respondents who planned to teach special education (SPED) (*n*=2) and secondary education (*n*=15). There were two respondents who replied "other". Again, most respondents were enrolled in a baccalaureate program, but there were some students who were pursuing a master's degree (*n*=7). A wide variety of teaching and learning experiences were represented among the survey-takers.

Because I was using human subjects, I sought approval from the University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) as the principal investigator (PI) and was granted approval before data collection began.

Instrumentation

I chose a survey as the instrument for data collection. In this portion of the chapter, a review of survey research and its uses and applications in educational settings are provided. I also outline some considerations for the design of the survey used in this study.

Survey Research

Survey research is rooted in the social sciences and was originally conducted for political and taxation purposes (Andres, 2012). However, survey research has evolved to include all manner of applied social research, and encompasses measurement procedures that involve asking questions of respondents. According to Andres, smaller scale surveys, such as the one in this study, have the "goal of gathering facts about or learning more about the demographic characteristics, behaviors, and attitudes of their students, employees, etc." (p. 1). A survey can be executed by questionnaire, "either written or

orally" and the "responses from the questions form the data for the study" (Brewer, 2009). The respondents' answers in the survey form the basis for "attitudes and ideas", and can often be generalizable to a population at large (p. 520).

It should be noted that some surveys have the objective to gather large-scale generalizable data with random sampling. The survey in this study was designed for a targeted population, did not employ random sampling, and, therefore, is nonprobabilistic. Regarding nonprobabilistic data, Andres tells us that "authors of many survey texts consider the group administration of a survey, for example within a classroom setting as legitimate" (p. 2).

In the 20th century, surveys have narrowed in scope and followed a scientific approach to collecting data. The concept of social science research was not to resolve to alleviate social problems (as studied by Charles Booth in 19th century England (1903)), but rather to embrace certain techniques, such as "objective observation, intense fact collecting and quantification" (p. 8). Surveys offer researchers flexibility of design and aid in gathering large amounts of data (Brewer, 2009) in a rather short amount of time. It is precisely this type of objective observation and ability to aggregate data that provided the cornerstone for this study.

Use and Application in Educational Settings

Surveys are a very popular tool in educational settings. According to Check and Schutt (2011), "survey research is an exceptionally efficient and productive method for investigating a wide array of educational research questions". A survey enables a researcher to answer a broad range of questions, with differing format types for varying

groups of respondents. Surveys in educational settings can focus on the administration, schools, teachers, or students. In Andres (2012), we learn that the focus of a survey "becomes one of asking questions of the right people to elicit meaningful answers that will advance our understanding of a given topic with the goal of improving practice, policy, research, and theory" (p. 10). As the goal of this research is to educe the relationship that K-5/6 preservice teachers have with the UCSS and ELLs, the researcher hopes to influence classroom practices relative to preservice teachers, and also policies that could affect the UCSS. Andres (2012) also discusses how another "goal of survey research is that it may be intended to be transferable" (p. 3). In other words, the data may be generalizable to another researcher's cause.

Additional uses in educational settings include the ability to gauge views and values of the respondents. This survey focuses on respondents' beliefs about the UCSS. According to Andres (2012), "the art of survey research is the ability to shape value judgments into a meaningful and powerful survey research design" (p. 11). When asked about the UCSS and whether or not it would help improve "my own instruction and classroom practice", respondents placed a value judgment on the influence of the UCSS document and the development of pedagogy. Belief statements such as these can be used as constructive guidance for administration and school districts.

Considerations for Survey Design

This study employed a cross-sectional study design because it was the most efficacious design given the time constraints for the execution of the study. A cross-sectional study offers researchers the opportunity to study the respondents' answers at

one point in time. According to Brewer, "each method (cross-sectional or longitudinal) has advantages and disadvantages and it is up to the researcher to select the design that works best for the study at hand" (p. 520). One of the disadvantages of cross-sectional research, which Brewer alludes to, is the lack of depth and breadth of information. For example, a longitudinal study can show change over time; two cross-sectional studies with the same research questions can also show change over time. If recording such changes over time were to be the goal of the research, then a longitudinal study would be preferred. Because this study specifically sought to merely investigate K-5/6 preservice teachers' beliefs and knowledge of the UCSS at a specific point in time, a cross-sectional survey was the appropriate choice for this research study.

In Chapter 5 I discuss recommendations for future research, which I believe would include a longitudinal study and a mixed methods design, which could include quantitative and qualitative data. Again for purposes of this study design and construction, the 58 respondents that took part in this survey were considered a sufficient sample size to answer the research questions. It would be beyond the scope of the existing design of this research to include qualitative data at this juncture, such as data that could be gathered from individual interviews and/or focus groups.

The survey used in this study is both versatile and efficient as it is an online survey using Qualtrics. The survey tool is exceptionally flexible, easy to program, and provides multiple options for formatting and data reporting. According to Check and Schutt (2011), an online survey tool can be administered to individuals, with questionnaire questions "mostly structured", and at a cost that is "very low" (p. 171). In addition, an online survey that is well designed allows researchers to tailor questions to

respondents, thereby making the survey more interesting and attractive, and, therefore, seem shorter.

For this survey design, respondents accessed this online questionnaire at their leisure (within the limitations and constraints set forth by the researcher.) Check and Schutt (2011) describe how "respondents are then asked to visit the website (often by just clicking on a link or a url)" (p. 176). For the purposes of this survey design, an embedded uniform resource locator (URL) was provided to the respondents via a Canvas page (i.e., with an online learning management system). The University of Utah uses an online hosting system called Canvas to store course resources such as syllabi, readings, online quizzes, and so forth. Students were guided by their instructors to a Canvas page for their specific course that included the URL for the survey. Qualtrics then recorded the responses from the respondents and provided aggregated results on a secure server. Qualtrics also enables researchers to do cross-tabulations of the data by comparing subsets from within the total population of respondents.

Data Collection

The student respondents came from two courses at the University, EDU 5200/6200, TLA, and LING 5811 Educating Language Learners. Respondents were recruited during class time to participate in the online survey. The survey was available to all students during a two-week period during spring semester of 2015. The online survey consisted of 38 questions with a variety of answer formats, such as Likert-scale questions, multiple-choice, multiple-answer, true/false, and fill in the blank. Respondents were informed that they could take the survey all at once or over multiple periods, as long

as they used the same Internet Protocol (IP) address. All of the respondents' answers were stored on the Qualtrics site and only accessed by the researcher. Access to the data required a login name and unique password that were known only to the researcher.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the demographic data, questions related to beliefs and knowledge of the UCSS, questions about the ELA portion of the UCSS and questions related to ELLs. Qualtrics provides data for export into Excel, Word, PowerPoint, or PDF. I exported the data into Excel and was able to analyze this information directly from my laptop, which requires a secure login to access the hard drive. The descriptive statistics included total responses for each question, including frequency of response, mean, and standard deviation.

Qualtrics also provides the researcher with respondents' coded response identifications (ID). These response IDs are recorded with individual alpha-numeric values (e.g., R_1hYcJ8yVU02gFZj, and R_2bH038Pk5IFU0bp) and also provide a corresponding IP address for each respondent (e.g., 67.2.187.105 and 67.166.75.4 correspond to the aforementioned response IDs.). The recorded responses also show the survey start and end time and the total time spent on the survey, a point that is also discussed in Chapter 4.

One of the more versatile functions of Qualtrics is the ability to create cross-tabulations. Qualtrics enables researchers to use a single variable in a cross-tab, or a multivariate approach. In other words, a multivariate approach involves the observation and analysis of more than one variable at a time. The survey asked respondents what

grade level they intended to teach in, and whether or not they were preservice or in-service teachers. These two variables were included in an 'and' statement. I used the cross-tab function to perform a multivariate analysis of respondents who replied that they plan to teach K-5/6 elementary education and are preservice teachers. This new subset of respondents was then compared to responses from the total group. The cross-tab data provided a new "universe" of respondents – 37, and I was able to analyze their belief statements and knowledge of the UCSS, the UCSS for ELA, and ELLs.

Design of this study was not controlled for outside sources related to the UCSS or ELLs. Since the survey design allowed for respondents to take the survey in whole or in part and in one or more sittings, there was no control for access to data about the UCSS. Even though according to Andres, "the only way of gathering most information on behavior, attitude, beliefs and opinions most efficiently is through asking individuals through survey research" (p. 9), responses, for the most part are unverifiable.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

The quantitative results of this study are presented in this chapter. In the first part of the chapter, an overview of the demographics related to all of the respondents is provided. In the second portion of this chapter descriptive statistics are presented that are directly attributable to the responses on the questions related to respondents' knowledge of and beliefs about the Utah Core State Standards (UCSS). The third part of this chapter provides results from respondents' answers related to knowledge of and beliefs about English Language Learners (ELLs). The fourth and final part of this chapter provides data from a subset of the total number of respondents, the K-5/6 preservice teacher. Results include total response rates, percentages, and frequencies of distribution. The cumulative number of respondents that started the survey was 58, with a completion rate of 95% (or n=55). The mean for the duration of time it took to complete the survey was 15 minutes. Of the completed surveys submitted, the fastest completion time was 2 minutes 29 seconds and the longest time to completion was 22 minutes and 20 seconds.

Demographic Data

The total number of responses was distributed fairly evenly between the respondents in the TLA course, EDU 5200/6200 (n=28) and the Educating English

Language Learners course, LING 5811(*n*=26). In addition to the two courses used in this study, respondents had also taken some of the other required courses needed to fulfill the requirements for the Utah State Office of Education (USOE) English as a Second Language (ESL) Endorsement. These courses included the following: Linguistics and Education LING 3200 (*n*=14), Content-Based Language Teaching LING 5812 (*n*=1), and LING 6812 (*n*=1), Introduction to Multicultural Education ECS 3150 (*n*=24), Assessment of Linguistically Diverse Populations ECS 5465 (*n*=18), and Seminar in Language Awareness EDU 5201 (*n*=8). It is important to note that the total number of other required courses taken exceeds the total number of respondents because multiple classes are required for State ESL Endorsement and respondents had often taken more than one course.

A majority of the respondents was between the ages of 18 - 24 (*n*=41 or 76%), female (*n*=45 or 83%), spoke English most often in their homes (*n*=47 or 87%), and were born in Utah (*n*=28 or 52%). Responses for other languages spoken at home included Chinese and Shona; 13% of the respondents spoke a language other than English at home, and 49% were born outside of Utah. Places mentioned were Germany, China, Ethiopia, and Mexico.

The majority of the respondents were preservice teachers. Ninety-four percent of the respondents replied that they were “working towards licensure” (*n*=51). Question 10 elicited information as to why respondents were enrolled at the University of Utah. Eighty-three percent replied that they were pursuing licensure *and* an undergraduate degree (*n*=45). The remaining 13% reported that they were pursuing licensure and a master’s degree (*n*=7), while 4% replied “other”. In Question 11, information about

grade level was collected. A majority of respondents replied that they intended to teach K-5/6 elementary – 69% (*n*=37) while 28% replied 6-12 secondary (*n*=15), 4% said Special Education (SPED) (*n*=2). The remaining 4% (*n*=2) checked other on the survey. Question 12 queried respondents about their intended area of specialization. K-5/6 elementary was 70% (*n*=37), English Language Arts 4% (*n*=2), History/Social Studies 9% (*n*=5), Mathematics 6% (*n*=3), Science 8% (*n*=4), ESL 15% (*n*=8), SPED 2% (*n*=1), Fine Arts/Music/Art 6% (*n*=3), Physical Education 2% (*n*=1), and Health Sciences 2% (*n*=1). Respondents were able to choose on more than area of specialization in this question. This is the reason why the total aforementioned responses are equal to more than the 54 completed surveys. The category of other had an open response field where respondents replied that they intended to teach World Languages, Spanish, or Dual Language Immersion (DLI).

Knowledge of the UCSS

Questions 13 - 18 are connected specifically to the UCSS. The questions elicited responses about preservice teachers' knowledge about the UCCS and their perceptions of the relationship between the knowledge of UCCS and the instruction they received in their preservice teacher education courses. When respondents were asked how much they thought they knew about the UCSS, results were "very little" with 9% (*n*=5), "some" with 63% (*n*=34), and "quite a bit" with 28% (*n*=15). The "very little" and "some" answers represent 75% of all responses. Questions 14 - 16 were designed to query respondents about the sources of information for their knowledge of the UCSS. A majority of 69% reported that their knowledge about the UCSS was part of a formal class

setting at the University of Utah (*n*=37), and that 31% of respondents reported learning about the UCSS in some other way (*n*=17). When asked if they also studied or learned about he UCSS in an informal setting, 78% of respondents answered affirmatively to Question 15 (*n*=42). Related to sources of information respondents used to learn about the UCSS in Question 16, 83% replied that their source was the University of Utah or other college classes (*n*=45), 61% said they have used the UCSS source document from the Utah State Office of Education (USOE) (*n*=33), 54% used online or social media (*n*=29), 31% claimed general media like newspaper or television (*n*=17), 22% said training at a public school (*n*=12), 11% declared professional development or continuing education (*n*=6), 4% replied principal or union (*n*=2), and 4% said "other" (*n*=2). The two respondents that marked "other" as their source of information replied that "conversing with family" was a source that they had had.

Question 17 asked about what sources were the "most helpful" in assisting preservice teachers' knowledge about the UCSS. Coursework at the University of Utah or other college classes garnered the highest percentage of "most helpful in learning about the UCSS" with 83% (*n*=44). The next "most helpful" source was the UCSS information posted on the USOE website with 34% (*n*=18), followed by online and social media with 21% (*n*=11), then training at a public school with 19% (*n*=10). The interpretation of "training at a public school" was likely part of a student's field experiences in the required courses, or, for in-service teachers, it could be part of their ongoing professional development provided through the districts. The remainder of responses was general media at 8% (*n*=4), and professional development or continuing education with one response each at 2%.

When asked about the most important purpose of the UCSS, respondents suggested that guiding the curriculum (*n*= 26 or 48%) and establishing standards for instruction (*n*=14 or 26%) were the two most valuable reasons for the existence of UCSS. No participants replied that guiding the administration of programs was important. Additionally, only 7% replied that guiding assessments and improving teaching and learning were the most important purpose of the UCSS (*n*=4).

Overall knowledge about the UCSS for English Language Arts (ELA) was asked about in general in Question 19. Respondents were asked to reply on a three-point scale: quite a bit, some, and very little. The range of overall knowledge from "some" to "quite a bit" was 84% of total respondents (*n*=45).

When asked whether all teachers were responsible for the "development of language and literacy skills" regardless of content area (Question 20), 100% of survey-takers answered "yes" (*n*=54).

Related to confidence and understanding of the UCSS for ELA, 84% of respondents in Question 21 said they were "somewhat confident" and "very confident" (*n*=45). The remainder were "not confident" with 16% (*n*=9). Since Questions 13, 19 and 21 all ask about knowledge and confidence related to the UCSS and ELA, these data are graphed for comparison purposes in Figure 4.1.

Respondents were next asked in Question 22 whether or not they believed that the Utah Common Core would help them "improve [their] own instruction and classroom practice". Most respondents answered "strongly agree" or "somewhat agree" (*n*=50) for a total of 94%. Just six percent of those surveyed answered "somewhat disagree" or "strongly disagree" (*n*=3).

Teaching to the UCSS and ELLs

Question 23 asked respondents to rate their preparedness on a five-point scale to teach to the UCSS for different groups of students. The first part of the question focused on all students and was then broken down into ELLs, students with special needs, academically at-risk students, and students in a specific content area. Most students felt "very prepared" or "somewhat prepared" (*n*=38) to teach all students and, in general, less prepared to teach specific groups of students. Regarding the preservice teachers' ability to teach to the UCSS when working with ELLs, the majority of those surveyed replied they were "very prepared" or "somewhat prepared" (*n*=29). Twenty students replied that they were "neutral" with regard to their preparedness to teach the UCSS, and only 3 replied "somewhat unprepared", while one respondent replied "unprepared".

In Question 26, survey-takers were asked about their preparedness to teach reading to these same groups of learners on a five-point scale. Respondents were more convinced of their preparedness to teach reading to all students with, "somewhat prepared" and "very prepared" (*n*=42). Additionally, respondents felt "somewhat prepared" and "very prepared" to teach reading to ELLs (*n*=37). Frequency of distribution for responses for the additional groups of students for Questions 23 and 26 are represented in Table 4.1.

The survey also queried respondents about their knowledge related to the developmental process of acquiring and using either a first or second (foreign) language in Question 24. Most respondents felt positive about their understanding of language acquisition, (*n*=49) or about 91% answering that they had a range or knowledge from "some" to "quite a bit". In a similar vein, Question 25 asked respondents to rate their

confidence teaching language concepts such as English grammar and sentence structure to learners. Again, there was a positive response to this question, with 92% responding with a range of agreement statements from agree to strongly agree.

Question 27 is formatted as a true/false statement and asks respondents about the ability of the UCSS to offer and "define the full range of support appropriate for English Language Learners." Forty-three percent of respondents expect that the UCSS would guide them with regard to ELLs (*n*=23). Fifty-seven percent of all respondents answered that this was a false statement (*n*=30). Question 28 asks if respondents believed that ELLs could "meet the standards in reading, writing, speaking and listening". Seventy percent believed this to be true (*n*=37). Conversely, 30% (*n*=16) reported for Question 28 that ELLs were not able to achieve grade-level benchmarks as described by the UCSS.

The next three questions of the survey, Questions 29 - 31, ask specifically about the UCSS standards focusing on English Language Arts (ELA) and specific reading, writing, and language standards put forth for Grade 4, Grade 2, and Kindergarten. Since this set of questions was aimed at the elementary education students, these data points are only described in the second section of this chapter for the K-5/6 preservice teacher subset. Figure 4.2 reports all responses for these data.

The final set of questions in the survey was about teacher beliefs and knowledge related to current and prior education and learning, and the on-site teaching environments they have been exposed to as part of the requirements for their courses. The survey concludes with the respondents' opinions about whether or not certain characteristics were most important or least important to be an effective teacher.

A belief statement was posited to students in Question 32 who replied that they

believed they needed more "explicit instruction" about the UCSS, with particular focus on ELA. Respondents replied on a four-point scale: strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, and strongly disagree. Cumulatively, students that answered with a range of agreement statements from strongly agree to somewhat agree equaled 84% of all respondents (*n*=45).

In Question 33, those queried reported that their education and professional development related the UCSS in ELA "has been of high quality". Respondents replied again on a four-point scale. The range of agreement statements from strongly agree to somewhat agree equaled 78% (*n*=42), while "somewhat disagree" and "strongly disagree" came to 22% (*n*=12).

An overwhelming 74% of respondents in Question 34 replied that course time and learning devoted to the UCSS "better prepared" them as teachers (*n*=39). In the minority, the frequency of resondents that replied "no" tallied nine (17%), while five survey respondents replied that they were "not sure" (9%).

A majority of 78% of respondents for Question 35 felt that field experience learning that focused on the UCSS objectives would "better prepare" them as preservice teachers (*n*=42). Negative replies totaled 11% of respondents.

The final question about respondents' beliefs about their coursework and field experiences is Question 36, which asks about the importance of "apply[ing] information from the UCSS to be an effective teacher". Answers were very similar to Question 22, which asked about whether the UCSS would help teachers improve their instructional and classroom practice. In Question 36, 93% stated that it was important to apply UCSS information to be an effective teacher.

The last two questions on the survey, Questions 37 and 38, focused on characteristics of effective teachers. For Question 37, "classroom management" skills were identified as the most important characteristic of effective teaching. Other characteristics mentioned included "building a strong relationship with students", and "enthusiasm for their content area". "Experience as a teacher", received the fewest responses. Figure 4.3 reports all responses.

In Question 38 respondents were asked what the *least* important characteristic was to be an effective teacher. Sixty-nine percent of those surveyed reported "experience as a teacher". All responses with frequencies of distribution are reported in Figure 4.4.

Results of K-5/6 Preservice Teachers

A portion of this survey was designed so that I could identify and aggregate data from K-5/6 elementary preservice teachers relative to their beliefs and knowledge about the UCSS and ELLs. Some questions on the survey were taken directly from data in the UCSS for ELA for elementary: knowledge of syntax, morphology, and other linguistic concepts like syllabification and grammatical structures. These are important concepts for teaching literacy skills. The new population computed was n=37. Questions 13 - 36 were specifically designed to inform and address the research questions delineated in Chapter 1. Results are reported relative to answering the research questions for this sub-group of K-5/6 preservice teachers.

Research Questions 1 and 3 asked respondents to report on their belief about whether their university coursework prepared them to teach and implement the UCSS. Research Question 1 focused on whether or not preservice teachers believed their

coursework, which is part of the ESL Endorsement and prepares them for teaching the UCSS. Research Question 2 focused on preservice teachers' confidence and knowledge of teaching language and grammatical structures. Research Question 3 focused on preservice teachers' beliefs about teaching and implementing the UCSS. Data tabulated for the K-5/6 preservice teacher population are presented in this section.

For question 14, which was about studying or learning about the UCSS in a formal class setting, 81% replied that they had in fact learned about the UCSS in a formal class setting (*n*=30), while 19% replied that they had not (*n*=7).

Question 34 asked if course time devoted to the UCSS better prepared them as teachers. This question had a three-point scale of yes, no, or not sure. Eighty-four percent of K-5/6 preservice teachers answered affirmatively and reported that they believed their preservice education at the University of Utah had prepared them to teach the UCSS (*n*=31). Sixteen percent replied "no" or "not sure" regarding this statement (*n*=6).

Research Question 4 asks if preservice teachers desire "more explicit instruction" on the UCSS in ELA. Survey Question 32 answers this question directly on a four-point agreement scale. When queried about desiring "more explicit instruction", especially in preparing them for teaching ELA, range of agreement from "strongly agree" to "somewhat agree" was 84% (*n*=31). The remainder of 16% (*n*=6) reported "somewhat disagree". None of the respondents in the K-5/6 preservice teacher group "strongly disagreed" with the statement about requiring more explicit instruction for the UCSS in ELA.

Related to quality of education and professional development in Question 33, K-5/6 preservice teachers believe that their preparation to teach the UCSS in ELA has been

of “high quality”. Survey Question 33 was posed as a four-point scale from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The range of agreement statements from “strongly agree” to “somewhat agree” equaled 90% (*n*=33). Four respondents replied that they “somewhat disagreed” with the belief that their education in the UCSS ELA had been of high quality (11%). No respondents in the K-5/6 preservice teacher group “strongly disagreed” with this statement.

In Question 35, students who believe that a portion of their field experience that focused on the UCSS objectives would better prepare them as teachers provided these results: 81% replied in the affirmative (*n*=30), 11% of respondents did not believe that field experience that focused on the UCSS would better prepare them (*n*=4), and 8% replied “not sure” to this statement (*n*=3).

A series of questions related to “teaching language and grammatical structures” were presented to this subset of respondents in Questions 21 and 29 - 31. Question 21 asked about overall “confidence and understanding” about the UCSS and ELA. On a three-point scale, 16% replied they were “very confident” (*n*=6), 76% replied “somewhat confident” (*n*=28) and 8% replied “not confident” (*n*=3).

Questions 29-31 asked for more linguistic specificity related to grade levels for ELA and drew upon information from the UCSS. For this set of questions respondents were asked to reply on a three-point scale: strongly able, somewhat able, and unable. A 68% majority of preservice K-5/6 respondents answered that they were “somewhat able” to teach the grade 4 reading standards relative to phonics, decoding, syllabification and morphology (*n*=25). Thirty-two percent replied they were “strongly able” (*n*=12) and none replied they were “unable”.

Question 30 asked this subset to rate their ability to teach the grade 2 writing standard, which employs concepts like linking words and temporal words. Results were a bit more varied here than in Question 29, with the majority of 57% replying "somewhat able" (*n*=21), 33% replying "strongly able" (*n*=12), and 11% replying "unable" (*n*=4).

Question 31 asks about the kindergartner language standard, which describes the most frequently occurring inflections and affixes. Preservice K-5/6 teachers answered that 51% were strongly able to teach this concept (*n*=19), whereas 46% rejoined that they were "somewhat able" (*n*=17), and only one participant, equaling 3%, said they were unable to teach this concept. Figure 4.5 of the K-5/6 preservice teacher subset relays these confidence levels and can be compared to Figure 4.2 for the overall respondent set.

The final Research Question that this survey aimed to answer was whether or not preservice K-5/6 teachers believed they were prepared to teach the UCSS for all students and for ELLs. Question 23 asked respondents to rate their preparedness on a five-point scale to teach the UCSS to all students. For this question, students were asked to rate themselves on a five-point scale: very prepared, somewhat prepared, neutral, somewhat unprepared, and not at all prepared. The range of preparedness from "very prepared" to "somewhat prepared" equaled 83% of the K-5/6 respondents (*n*=30). Eight percent were "neutral" and "somewhat unprepared" (*n*=3, *n*=3) and only one student replied that they were "not at all prepared" (3%).

Results seemed more toward the middle of the Likert scale when respondents rated their preparedness to teach the UCSS to ELLs, with 62% of students responding that they were "very" or "somewhat prepared" (*n*=23), 35% responding "neutral" (*n*=13), and zero students saying they were "not at all prepared."

Survey Question 26 was worded similarly to survey Question 23, but had the more specific goal of assessing preservice K-5/6 teachers' preparedness as related to teaching reading to all students. The scale of preparedness for "very prepared" to "somewhat prepared" was 90%. (*n*=33). Only four students replied they believed they were "neutral" on their preparedness to teach reading to all students, which represented 11% of this group; while zero respondents replied that they were "somewhat unprepared" or "not at all prepared" to teach reading to all students.

When respondents were asked to rate their preparedness on a five-point scale to teach reading to ELLs, results were slightly different than the answers given above for "all students". Of preservice K-5/6 teachers, 76% felt they were "very prepared" or "somewhat prepared" (*n*=28); while 24% sensed they were "neutral" on this issue (*n*=9). Again, zero preservice K-5/6 respondents said they were "somewhat unprepared" or "not at all prepared" to teach reading to ELLs.

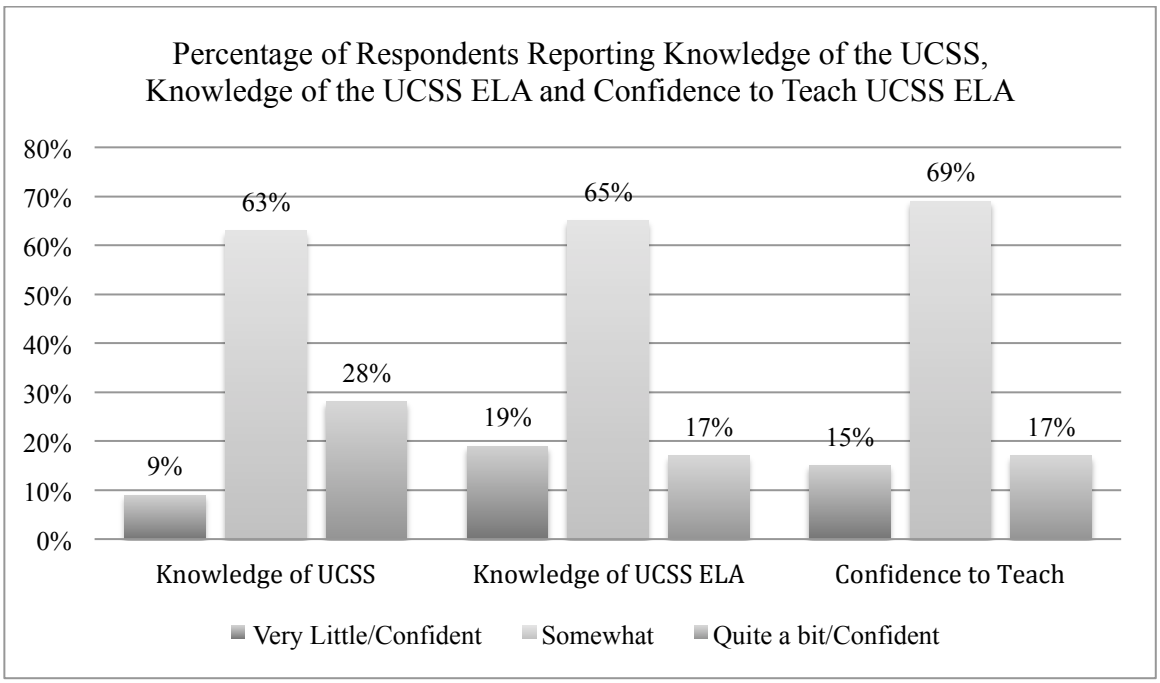

Figure 4.1 Percentages of Respondents Reporting Their Knowledge of the UCSS, Knowledge of the UCSS ELA, and Confidence to Teach the UCSS ELA.

Table 4.1

Frequencies of Distribution: Preparedness to Teach UCSS and Reading.

Preparedness to Teach UCSS and Reading					
Questions 23 (UCSS) and 26 (Reading)	Not Prepared	Somewhat Unprepared	Neutral	Somewhat Prepared	Very Prepared
All students	2/0	4/2	9/10	25/24	13/18
ELLs	1/0	3/2	20/15	21/28	8/9
Special Needs	4/3	13/8	19/21	11/14	6/8
Academically At-Risk	2/1	4/3	17/16	22/25	7/10

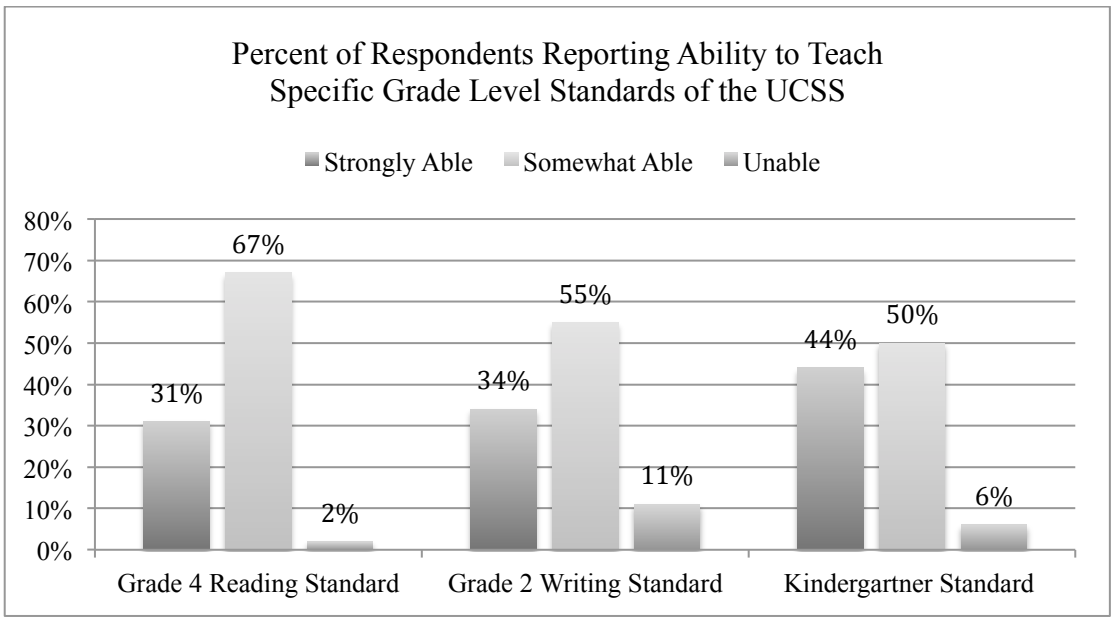

Figure 4.2 Reported Percentages by Respondents of Ability to Teach and Knowledge of Grade 4, Grade 2, and Kindergartner Standards Found in the UCSS.

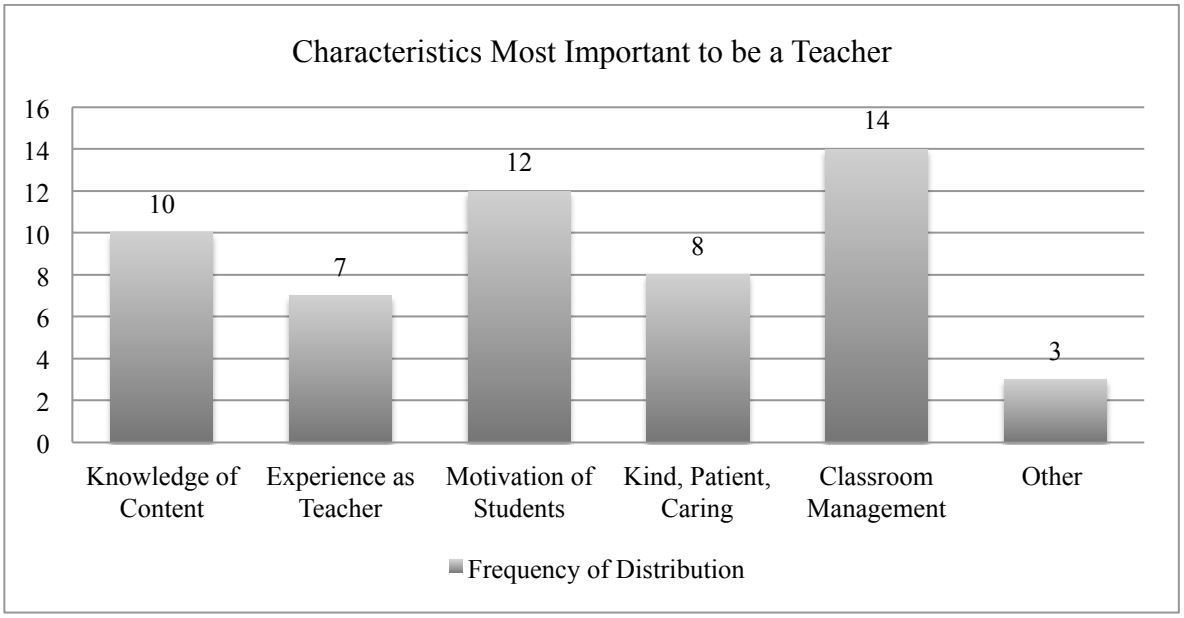

Figure 4.3 Frequency of Distribution of Characteristics Most Important to Be an Effective Teacher.

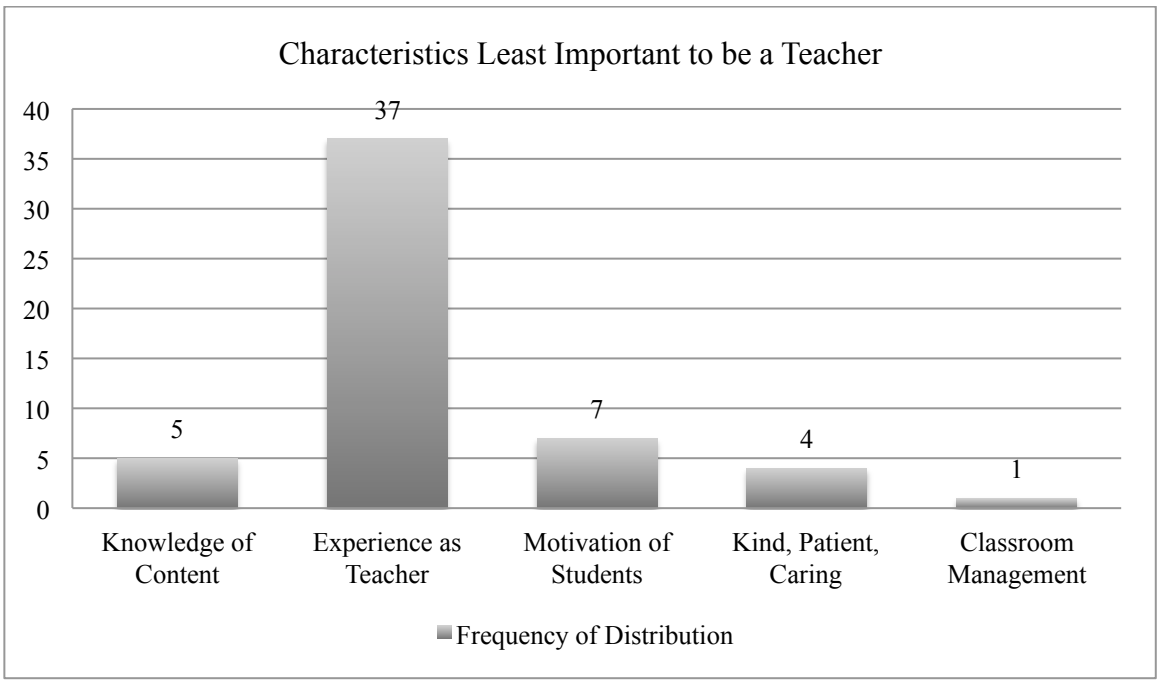

Figure 4.4 Frequency of Distribution of Characteristics Least Important to Be an Effective Teacher.

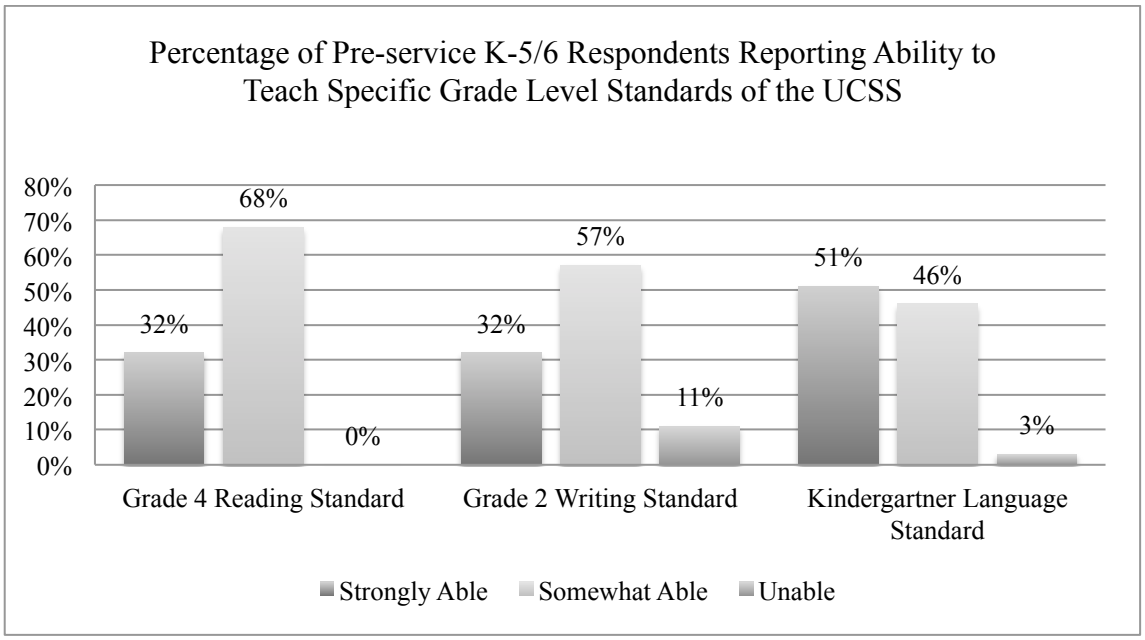

Figure 4.5 Preservice K-5/6 Teachers and UCSS Standards for Grade 4 Reading, Grade 2 Writing, and Kindergartner ELA.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

The goal of this research study was to investigate preservice teachers' knowledge and beliefs related to the Utah Core State Standards (UCSS), especially as the UCSS relates to teaching English Language Learners (ELLs). The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the results of the survey by first examining the reported results for the total number of respondents, and then, to examine the data provided by K-5/6 preservice teachers. The chapter is being organized in this manner for two reasons: (1) the K-5/6 group comprised the majority of the respondents and (2) the survey questions were designed specifically to elicit answers about K-5/6 preservice teachers and the UCSS ELA.

The discussion will first highlight the answers for the total number of respondents. This section will be followed by a discussion of data from the K-5/6 preservice teachers' beliefs related to the coursework required for licensure and ESL Endorsement in the State. The discussion will then focus on confidence levels for preservice teacher in teaching ELLs, their preparedness to teach the UCSS, their desire for more explicit instruction of the UCSS, and their preparedness to teach to the UCSS with ELLs. Furthermore, by comparing the response rates of the total number of K-5/6 preservice teachers, recognizable patterns emerge related to the questions that motivated

this study. The initial discussion is framed by the five research questions initially presented in Chapter 1. The research questions are then re-introduced and discussed in the body of this chapter as they relate to the data from the survey. I also discuss the limitations of the research study and implications for future research.

Research Questions and Survey Data

The first research question focuses on whether or not preservice teachers believe that their coursework at the University of Utah, which is part of the licensure requirement and the English as a Second Language (ESL) endorsement for the State of Utah, prepares them for teaching the UCSS. The third research question focuses on whether or not preservice teachers believe that the courses they take are preparing them to implement the UCSS.

Background information was collected to determine how much respondents believed they knew about the UCSS and whether or not students had studied or learned about the UCSS in formal classroom settings as part of their licensure program. A majority of the total respondents replied that they knew "some" or "quite a bit" about the UCSS and that they had, in fact, been exposed to the UCSS in their teacher education program at the University. Interestingly, the K-5/6 preservice teacher subset showed a 17% increase over the total number of respondents when asked whether or not they had learned about the UCSS in a formal class setting. Reported as an index, 17% more of the K-5/6 preservice teacher subset replied that they had learned about the UCSS in their formal class work than the total number of respondents.

There has been an increase in the amount of attention that the UCSS for public

schools has been getting in the public media. *The Salt Lake Tribune* reports that since the adoption of the UCSS in 2010, there have been more than 960 articles written on the subject (2015). Similarly, *The Deseret News* reports that they have published more than 750 articles on the UCSS (2015). In a similar vein, KSL.com reports more than 540 stories on the subject (2015). A majority of the K-5/6 preservice teacher subset replied that they had, in fact, been exposed to informal sources related to the UCSS such as general media and/or online social media. Therefore, due to exposure during formal course work and informal sources such as general and online media, it is reasonable to conclude that awareness levels of the UCSS among K-5/6 preservice teachers is of some consequence.

When the total body of respondents was asked if they believed that their teacher education program and other activities for professional development for the UCSS for English Language Arts (ELA) has been of high quality, one-quarter of the total surveyed disagreed with this statement. This result could be somewhat discouraging, depending on how we interpret these data. For the K-5/6 preservice teacher subset, nine-tenths agree that their education and professional development has been of high quality. The possible reasons for a higher percentage of positive response from K-5/6 preservice teacher group may indicate that there is a difference in how the UCSS is incorporated into the teacher education curriculum for elementary and secondary teachers. It would seem like a useful exercise to be able to identify which courses focus on the UCSS and how much instruction is given about the UCSS in all of the courses that are required for licensure. When all of the respondents were asked whether the teacher education courses that devoted course time to learning about the UCSS prepared them to be better teachers, only

a handful of the total number of participants replied negatively or were “not sure”.

As presented in Chapter 3, the respondent pool came from students enrolled in two different courses required for licensure and for ESL endorsement. Both courses require a field experience in which students work at least 15 hours in K-12 class classrooms that have at least 30% ELLs. The reason for the inclusion of field experiences in most of the preservice teacher education curriculum is a sound one. Although learning about teaching is an important component of teacher development, it must be balanced with ongoing experiences in teaching and in classrooms with learners. The purpose of the field experience in these two classes is to encourage the development of reflective practice, in which they use their ongoing experiences in classrooms to learn about teaching. Respondents were queried as to whether or not they believed that having a portion of their field experience focus on the UCSS would better prepare them as teachers. Four-fifths of the total body of respondents agreed with this statement, as did the preservice teacher subset. It seems that preservice teachers recognize the importance of classroom experience and instruction from a cooperating teacher as an essential component of their development as teachers.

The UCSS provides educators and administrators two chapters with standards in English Language Arts (ELA) for reading, writing, speaking, and listening, and language for Grades K-5 and 6-12. For the purposes of this study, the K-5 elementary education document was the focus of this research. Research Question 2 focused on whether or not preservice teachers had confidence in their knowledge of teaching language and its grammatical structures, which are presumably contained within the common core for English language arts. In the past, language and literacy development in secondary

education were seen as the purview of English language arts teachers, with other content area teachers limiting their responsibilities to content. So, if students, including ELLs, had difficulty with reading or writing in the content areas, it was not the responsibility of the science or math teacher to help them develop literacy skills but rather the English language arts teacher. In terms of teachers' responsibilities for language and literacy development, the culture of public school is slowly changing, focusing on the responsibilities of content area teachers for language and literacy development in the content areas.

One of the goals of this survey was to discover whether or not preservice teachers felt they had confidence teaching the ELA core in both elementary and secondary. To that end, 84% of the total body of respondents replied that they were "somewhat confident" in teaching the ELA standards. The remaining 17% was "not confident." A reassuring 92% of the K-5/6 preservice teacher sub-group replied that they were "very confident" or "somewhat confident" in their ability to teach the ELA standards. An ongoing question that teacher educators will want to continue asking is how to raise the overall confidence levels of all of the preservice teachers relative to the UCSS for ELA. Would more exposure with explicit teaching pertaining to the UCSS ELA standards either during class time or during field experiences result in more participants replying "very confident"?

The UCSS ELA describes linguistically appropriate objectives and grade-specific standards for each grade level in its K-5 document. Many of the concepts in the ELA core for elementary are concepts that are important for effective teaching of English language learners. For example, linguistic concepts related to syntax (e.g., "appropriate contextual

use of the progressive tense"), syllabification (e.g., "knowledge that every syllable must have a vowel to determine the number of syllables in a word"), morphology (e.g., "roots and affixes"), and phoneme identification (e.g., "knowledge of all letter-sound correspondences") (2013). In addition, there is a focus on basic concepts for writing that ELLs often find challenging, such as the use of linking words, such as *also*, *too*, and *besides*, and temporal lexemes, such as *now*, *next*, and *tomorrow*. The Grade 4 reading standard from the UCSS focuses on phonics, decoding, syllabification, and morphology. For example, the ability to accurately read "unfamiliar multisyllabic words in context and out of context" (p. 365). Sixty-seven percent of the overall respondents claimed that they were "somewhat able" to teach these skills, and the K-5/6 preservice teacher subgroup had a similar rate of response. These concepts do not appear in the ELA core for secondary. Tradition has suggested that these concepts be incorporated into the grade level for which they are deemed appropriate for English-speaking students. However, if all teachers must be responsible for English language development for all students, and if these concepts are key for ELLs at all grade levels, then would it seem logical that all teachers should have knowledge of the ELA core for elementary and secondary.

The concern that teacher educators have is on how they might increase their level of confidence about the ELA core (and in both the elementary and secondary core for secondary teachers) to "strongly able". Related to the Grade 2 writing standard in the ELA core for elementary, 55% of total respondents felt they were "somewhat able" to teach these concepts, e.g., linking words and temporal words. The result was only slightly higher for the K-5/6 preservice teacher group at 57%. Would more intensive coursework related to these linguistic and literacy development concepts provide preservice teachers

with greater confidence or should we even expect higher confidence levels among preservice teachers?

When queried about inflections and affixes as part of the ELA core in the Kindergarten standards, 50% of the total group responded that they were "somewhat able" to teach these concepts, with 46% for the K-5/6 preservice teacher group. This is the first instance in the data whereby the K-5/6 preservice teacher group reported a lower level of knowledge on the ELA core for elementary than the total group. Additionally, it is worrisome to note that in both groups there were respondents who claimed they were "unable" to teach inflections and affixes. It may be an issue of terminology as *inflection* and *affix* are considered technical terms by some teachers. Perhaps more exposure to linguistic terminology as is presented in the ELA K-5 core standards and subsequent preservice teacher practice with these specific linguistic concepts should be available in teacher education courses - specifically, practice with the core that focuses on content areas with concepts tied to content vocabulary. This type of practice would not only help confidence levels, but also help with the understanding that linguistic and literacy development is an important concept underpinning all content areas. It is also important to point out that a level of knowledge is different from an ability level. Knowing these terms is not the same things as being able to teach the concepts or knowing how to incorporate the concepts into content-area teaching.

Regardless of the concerns expressed above, I believe that the confidence level of the respondents relative to most of the concepts in the survey is encouraging. Whether teacher effectiveness is considered from the perspective of actual skills and abilities or from levels of confidence about one's skills and abilities, it is important to point out that

one's ability and one's belief about ability are interconnected. The underlying construct that influences teaching ability is a teacher's self-efficacy—the belief that one can be an effective teacher. Beginning with the early work of Bandura (1986, 1997), research has shown that teacher development is shaped by attitudes and beliefs (Jones & Carter, 2007; Keys & Bryan, 2001). Furthermore, new knowledge about teaching and learning is constructed with existing networks and beliefs.

There is a strong relationship between Research Question 4, which focused on whether or not preservice teachers desire more coursework and/or explicit instruction for implementing and/or teaching the ELA common core, and survey instrument Question 32, which states, "I believe I need more explicit instruction about the UCSS especially for ELA". Survey Question 32 sought to explicate the degree to which respondents "believe [they] need more explicit instruction about the Utah Common Core especially for English Language Arts". Tellingly, more than four-fifths of the total number of respondents replied that they "strongly agree" or "somewhat agree" with this statement. Of the K-5/6 preservice subset of respondents, four-fifths replied affirmatively to this statement. An integrated design to incorporate the UCSS ELA in curricula is strongly recommended. In summary, it would appear that both of the groups of respondents desire coursework and explicit instruction with regard to the ELA common core.

Preparation to teach the common core was a key question to this group of respondents. Research Question 5 focused on whether or not preservice teachers believed they are prepared to teach from the UCSS to ELLs. When asked how prepared they personally felt to teach to different groups of students, the majority of the total survey-takers replied "somewhat prepared" or "very prepared" to teach all students,

ELLs, SPED, and academically at-risk students in their particular content areas. For the K-5/6 preservice teacher subset, the majority of this subset also replied they were "somewhat prepared" or "very prepared" to teach ELLs. Because nearly one-quarter of our state-wide public school students come from minority households (and there are many more in urban areas), it is absolutely critical that preservice teachers feel "very prepared" to teach the common core to ELLs. If we want to increase the confidence levels of the preservice teachers, it would seem that more exposure to the common core and more opportunities to work with the concepts in the preservice teacher education program would be a logical way to do this.

A survey question was posited regarding preparation to teach the UCSS and reading to all students, ELLs, SPED students, and academically at-risk students. In terms of teaching reading skills, 75% of the total number of respondents replied that they were "somewhat prepared" or "very prepared" to teach reading for all learners. Two-thirds of the total survey group still felt they were "somewhat" or "very prepared" to teach reading to ELLs. In contrast, our K-5/6 preservice teachers showed significantly more optimism to teach all students and ELLs. Nine-tenths claimed they were "somewhat" or "very prepared" to teach all students reading, whereas three-quarters replied "somewhat" or "very prepared" to teach ELLs reading. In sum, it appears that for Research Question 5, a majority of preservice teachers believe they are in fact prepared to teach the UCSS for ELLs. There still remains, however, a small handful of K-5/6 preservice teachers who could feel better prepared to teach reading to ELLs.

Limitations

The study is not without its limitations. A number of possible constraints rise to the forefront. First, developing and crafting a cross-sectional survey must be weighed against the length of time it takes to complete the survey. Second, one must consider the concept of two surveys: pre-course survey (before coursework) and post-course survey (after, or as a course concludes). Third, the depth and breadth of the sample is discussed. And, finally, the consideration of including other higher institutions of learning in Utah is proffered. These concerns are part of the discussion in this section.

It should be noted that some questions in the survey are adapted from the National Survey of Teacher Perspectives on the Common Core, EPE Research Center (October 2012). An example of the questions that were modified for this research included queries such as "familiarity with my state's content standards in English Language Arts", "information sources [..] about the Common Core State Standards," whether or not respondents "received professional development or training related to the Common Core State Standards", and belief statements such as "Overall, my training and professional development for the Common Core State Standards have been of high quality" (2013). But, since this study aimed to discover K-5/6 preservice teacher beliefs and knowledge about the UCSS and ELLs, more questions could have been crafted to determine the extent to which this subset knows about language learning and acquisition. Additionally, taking information directly from the UCSS source document, more questions with linguistic foci in other grade levels could add richness to the data. As discussed in the chapter on results, the survey instrument took 15 minutes to complete. Regardless of the population of respondents, there are real-time limits that individuals are willing to invest

to take a survey. Research into web-based surveys, instrument length, and salience is a topic of great import, according to Issue 5, 2008 of the *Public Opinion Quarterly*. Toepoel and colleagues (2008) report in their paper "Effects of Design in Web Surveys" that duration of panel participation affects the quality of survey participation (2008). In addition, they report, "the number of surveys in which they have participated affects responses" (p. 987). This study did not control for duration or previous exposure to survey taking. Therefore, effects on response rate or quality of participation are not reported herein.

Longitudinal data could certainly be seen as adding value to most investigative research activities because additional respondents could undoubtedly bolster quantitative data sets. Additionally, and more germane to the argument at hand, belief and knowledge statements could change over time and a bivariate or multivariate analysis could be incorporated into this study. For example, if a precourse survey and postcourse survey were administered, augmented data sets could be evaluated: did knowledge of the UCSS change over time? Did respondents gain more insights into teaching ELLs over time? Did preparation to teach ELLs change over time? More cross-tabulations of the data with a longitudinal study would provide insights that a one-time-only survey cannot currently aim to answer. Also, as mentioned in the methodology and results chapter, this survey was administered at the end of the Spring 2015 semester. As such, based on the syllabi from both classes, students from EDU 5200/6200 and LING 5811 would have had additional knowledge and exposure to teaching ELLs towards the end of this semester.

Another limitation of the data is the sample size and reliability. Tokens from 55 respondents were gathered; 37 of who were K-5/6 preservice teachers. According to

Litwin, reliability of a sample is defined as "a statistical measure of how reproducible a survey instrument's data are" (1995). Litwin asserts that "reliability is commonly assessed" with the "test-retest" form (p. 8). While additional survey participants may not yield statistically different results, nevertheless, there is a limitation of a cross-sectional survey that has only had one application.

Including other higher institutions of learning in this survey could certainly add to the data, as curricula, syllabi and degree course requirements vary widely from school to school. Since the research is specifically concerned with preservice teachers in Utah, a coordinated effort amongst multiple schools of education or departments of applied linguistics could mount an integrated effort to discover the knowledge and beliefs of preservice teachers with regard to the UCSS and ELLs. This, in turn, could affect course design and degree requirements.

Recommendations

Respondents in this survey believe they need "more explicit instruction about the Utah Common Core, especially for English Language Arts". How can educators and course designers at the university level ensure that this happens? By incorporating the UCSS ELA into coursework so that frequent, regular exposure to the UCSS makes it a commonplace occurrence to our K-5/6 preservice teachers. For example, in EDU 5200, TLA, pages lifted directly from the UCSS can be included in each class with each new topic discussed. In the module on morphology in EDU 5200, examples from the UCSS text can be used as models or examples of what our teachers need to teach to so that all their students can learn the core standard. Furthermore, as part of the final project for

both EDU 5200 and LING 5811, students must quote from either the UCSS or the WIDA standards to show they have incorporated language standards in their projects. This is a great last step during coursework – the onus is squarely on the instructors of record to do more incorporation of the standards during the semester.

While most of our respondents claimed that their education and professional development in the UCSS ELA had been of high quality, there were a number of students who disagreed with this statement. A suggestion for future research would be to delve further into this question with open-ended response questions and examine why students felt that their education in the UCSS ELA had not been of high quality. Additionally, should the College of Education deliver its own guidelines with regard to incorporating the UCSS ELA into coursework? Early results say, "yes" to this question, as respondents roundly replied that, "courses that devoted course time to learning about the Utah Common Core better prepared [them] as a teacher".

Irrespective of the belief statements presented above, far too many respondents – both from the total number surveyed as well as the K-5/6 preservice subset – replied that the Utah Core State Standards "define the full range of support appropriate for English Language Learners". How could our students possibly be misinterpreting the goals of the UCSS and what is and is not included in the standards? In order for our teachers to fully understand the UCSS, they must first have a better and deeper understanding of what the UCSS does and what it does not do. Courses and instructors can easily tease this apart for students by explicitly giving a history of the core standards, as well as how application of the WIDA standards can assist them with their ELLs.

Conclusion

The Utah Common Core Standards (UCSS) have been a politically and socially charged issue affecting parents, school districts, teachers and students. However, since its adoption by the State of Utah, curricula both at local elementary schools and institutions of higher learning have modified their teaching and learning strategies to embrace this framework. Simultaneously, school districts throughout Utah have seen a rise in their ELL populations. The ability to adhere to the UCSS while also servicing language learners may present difficulties for some K-5/6 preservice teachers.

Preparation to teach the UCSS to mainstream students and ELLs, confidence in their knowledge of teaching language and grammar, coursework or explicit instruction in the UCSS for ELLs are all part and parcel of the purpose of this study. Most of the K-5/6 preservice teacher respondents feel they are only somewhat prepared to teach the UCSS to ELLs. Additionally, many desire explicit training tied directly to the UCSS during their coursework and field experience. Their confidence to teach linguistic concepts like grammatical structures, morphology, and syntax is also tenuous. One approach would be to incorporate more explicit demonstrations and understanding of the World-class Instruction Design and Assessment (WIDA) standards in all coursework required for State ESL Endorsement (WIDA 2015). WIDA standards are expressly designed for educators and language learners alike. To this end, they serve as a basis for educating teachers about what ELLs need to be successful learners, while drawing upon an informed research-base. The WIDA standards could certainly augment the UCSS and improve the educational experience of our preservice teachers. In the preservice teacher education program coursework, where are the WIDA standards explicitly taught?

Determining the answer to this question would be another area for further research.

Another resource that would be an excellent tool to incorporate into the preservice teacher education program is the Center for Applied Linguistics' Practitioner Brief (CAL 2013). This document addresses implementation of the Common Core in the classroom with a specific focus on ELLs. Given the feedback from the respondents in this survey, it seems that instruction should be explicit and offered multiple times throughout the program, including in the field experience.

For our K-5/6 preservice teachers to employ the most efficacious pedagogical strategies, it is essential to provide learning opportunities in the teacher education program that align with the UCSS. Because the UCSS does not specifically address the needs of ELLs, it is also important to provide learning opportunities that align with the WIDA standards. The data from this survey show that the preservice K-5/6 respondents were less confident about their preparation for working with ELLs and other students at risk than they were about their overall preparation for working with K-5/6 learners. Further research should determine how and when the activities related to WIDA standards are occurring within the courses that are required for licensure and for ESL endorsement for this population.

APPENDIX

QUESTIONNAIRE

1. In which class(es) are you currently enrolled this semester? If you are enrolled in multiple classes on this list, check all that apply.

a) EDU 5200 / 6200

b) EDU 1010

c) LING 5811

d) LING 5812

2. Which of the required classes for State ESL Endorsement have you taken? Please check all that apply.

a) LING 3200

b) LING 5811

c) LING 5812

d) ECS 3150

e) ECS 5645

f) EDU 5201

f) EDU 5200/6200

g) LING 6812

3. What is your age?

a) 18-24 years

b) 25-39 years

c) 40+ years

4. What is your gender?

a) Male

b) Female

c) Other

5. What is the language that is spoken most often in your home?

a) English

b) Spanish

c) Both English and Spanish

d) Another language. Please write your home language below.

6. What is your place of birth?

a) Utah

b) Another State in U.S.

c) Outside of U.S. Please write your place of birth below.

7. Are you a preservice teacher working towards licensure**?**

a) Yes

b) No

8. If you are a preservice teacher, have you been admitted to the licensure program?

a) Not applicable

b) Yes

c) No

d) I have applied but not yet been admitted

9. Are you an in-service teacher (i.e., I already have State licensure)?

a) Yes

b) No

10. Why are you currently enrolled as a student at the University of Utah?

a) I am pursuing licensure and an undergraduate degree

b) I am pursuing licensure and a master's degree

c) I am pursuing a PhD

d) I am taking professional development hours to maintain my licensure or make a career change

e) Other

11. At what grade level do you teach or intend to teach?

a) K-5/6 elementary

b) 6-12 secondary

c) SPED

d) Other

12. What content area do you specialize in or intend to specialize in?

a) Elementary Education

b) English Language Arts

c) History/Social Studies

d) Mathematics

e) Science

f) ESL

g) SPED

h) Fine Arts/Music/Art

i) Physical Education

j) Health Sciences

k) Other

13. How much do you think you know about the Utah Common Core?

a) Very little

b) Some

c) Quite a bit

14. Have you studied or learned about the Utah Common Core in a formal class setting as part of your licensure program at the University of Utah?

a) Yes

b) No

15. Have you studied or learned about the Utah Common Core in an informal setting?

a) Yes

b) No

16. Of the following sources of information, which have you used the most to learn about the Utah Common Core?

a) University of Utah or other college classes

b) Training at a public school

c) Professional Development or Continuing Education courses

d) General Media (newspaper, television, radio)

e) Online / Social Media

f) USOE Utah State Common Core Standards Document

g) Principal / Union or Other

h) Other

17. Of the following sources of information, which have been most helpful to you in learning about the Utah Common Core?

a) University of Utah or other college classes

b) Training at a public school

c) Professional Development or Continuing Education courses

d) General Media (newspaper, television, radio)

e) Online / Social Media

f) USOE Utah State Common Core Standards Document

g) Principal / Union or Other

h) Other

18. What do you think the most important purpose of the Utah Common Core is?

a) Outlines choices for teachers

b) Helps guide the curriculum

c) Guides the administration of programs

d) Guides assessment and testing

e) Establishes a standard

f) Improves teaching and learning

g) Other

19. Please rate your overall knowledge on the Utah Core State Standards for English Language Arts:

a) Very little

b) Some

c) Quite a bit

20. Do you believe that all teachers regardless of content area specialty are responsible for the development of language and literacy skills, particularly as they relate language in a content area?

a) Yes

b) No

21. Please rate your overall confidence with regard to teaching the Utah Common Core for English Language Arts:

a) Very confident

b) Somewhat confident

c) Not confident

22. In general, I believe that the Utah Core State Standards will help me improve my own instruction and classroom practice:

a) Strongly agree

b) Somewhat agree

c) Somewhat disagree

d) Strongly disagree

23. On a five-point scale (where 5 is 'very prepared' and 1 is 'not at all prepared'), how prepared do you personally feel to teach the Utah Common Core to the following groups of students?

All students	5	4	3	2	1

English Language Learners	5	4	3	2	1
Students with special needs	5	4	3	2	1
Academically at-risk students	5	4	3	2	1
Students in a particular content area	5	4	3	2	1
Please tell us which content area					

24. Please rate your overall knowledge with regard to the developmental process of acquiring and using language, either a first or second/foreign language:

a) Very little

b) Some

c) Quite a bit

25. I have confidence teaching language concepts, such as English grammar and sentence structure, to all learners:

a) Strongly agree

b) Somewhat agree

c) Somewhat disagree

d) Strongly disagree

26. On a five-point scale (where 5 is ‘very prepared’ and 1 is ‘not at all prepared’), how prepared do you personally feel to teach reading to the following groups of students?

All students	5	4	3	2	1
English Language Learners	5	4	3	2	1
Students with special needs	5	4	3	2	1

Academically at-risk students 5 4 3 2 1

27. The Utah Common Core State Standards define the full range of support appropriate for English Language Learners.

a) True

b) False

28. In Utah, each grade will include students who are still acquiring English. For those students, it is possible to meet the standards in reading, writing, speaking and listening without displaying native-like control of conventions and vocabulary.

a) True

b) False

29. The Grade 4 Reading Standard is about phonics, decoding, syllabification and morphology. Rate your ability to teach these four skills.

a) Strongly able

b) Somewhat able

c) Unable

30. The Grade 2 Writing Standard employs concepts like linking words and temporal words. Rate your ability to teach these two ideas.

a) Strongly able

b) Somewhat able

c) Unable

31. The Kindergartner Language Standard describes the most frequently occurring inflections and affixes. Rate your knowledge of these two concepts.

a) Strongly able

b) Somewhat able

c) Unable

32. I believe I need more explicit instruction about the Utah Common Core, especially for English Language.

a) Strongly agree

b) Somewhat agree

c) Somewhat disagree

d) Strongly disagree

33. I believe my education and professional development for the Utah Common Core in English Language Arts has been of high quality:

a) Strongly agree

b) Somewhat agree

c) Somewhat disagree

d) Strongly disagree

34. Do you believe that the courses you took that devoted course time to learning about the Utah Common Core better prepared you as a teacher?

a) Yes

b) No

c) Not sure

35. Do you believe that having a portion of your field experience focus on the Utah Common Core objectives would better prepare you as a teacher?

a) Yes

b) No

b) Not sure

36. In your opinion, how important is it to apply information from the Utah Common Core to be an effective teacher?

a) Very important

b) Somewhat important

c) Slightly important

d) Not at all important

37. Which of the following characteristics is the **most** important to be an effective teacher?

a) Knowledge of the content

b) Experience as a teacher

c) Motivation of students

d) A kind, patient and caring attitude towards students

e) Classroom management

f) Other. Please describe

38. Which of the following characteristics is the **least** important to be an effective teacher?

a) Knowledge of the content

b) Experience as a teacher

c) Motivation of students

d) A kind, patient and caring attitude towards students

e) Classroom management

Some questions are adapted from the National Survey of Teacher Perspectives on the Common Core, EPE Research Center (October 2012).

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